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The Women Theologian and the Ideal of Christian Wisdom

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THE WOMEN THEOLOGIAN
AND THE
IDEAL OF CHRISTIAN WISDOM

Teresa of Jesus, better known as St. Teresa of Avila, was born on March 28, 1515 and died on October 15, 1582, four-hundred years ago tomorrow. By any human standards this sixteenth century Spaniard was an extraordinary woman. Despite the restrictions placed on the education and the lifestyle of women in her time Teresa, who entered the cloistered religious Order of Mount Carmel at the age of twenty-one, not only achieved superlatively the ideals of the life she had chosen but virtually single-handedly reformed the feminine branch of the Carmelite Order and cooperated with St. John of the Cross in the reformation of the masculine branch. While carrying out the arduous work of reformation, including the founding of new houses, the governing of local communities, and the administering of the affairs of the Reform, Teresa managed to write more than most professionals of our day produce in a lifetime and to serve as spiritual director for some of the most religiously talented people of her time, including her young collaborator John of the Cross. Teresa was formally declared a Saint by Pope Gregory XV on March 12, 1622. By the example of her holiness, the influence of her writings, and the life and work of

the members of the Order she refounded, Teresa of Avila remains an important spiritual force in the contemporary world.

However, the distinction which focuses my attention in this paper is one which Teresa shares with only one other woman in Christian history, St. Catherine of Siena whose six hundredth anniversary we celebrated in 1980. On September 27, 1970, Pope Paul VI proclaimed Teresa of Avila a Doctor of the Church.¹ Although the criteria for this title are verified in a number of the remarkable women in Christian history only Teresa and Catherine have officially joined the ranks of the approximately thirty men who bear the title. Doctor of the Church is the most exclusive category of sanctity the Church has delineated and its criteria make it plain why this is so.

A Doctor of the Church must, of course, be a teacher of orthodox doctrine, enjoy ecclesial approbation, and be officially declared a doctor by the appropriate ecclesiastical authorities. But much more important than these somewhat external criteria are the two intrinsic characteristics which occur so rarely in the same person, namely, great sanctity and eminent erudition.² Erudition includes both learning and teaching and as we all know from experience great learning does not always entail the ability to teach. Thus, a Doctor of the Church is one in whom the Church recognizes the felicitous union of remarkable personal holiness, unusual depth of understanding, and a striking effectiveness in communicating the truth of the faith to others.

Among the Doctors of the Church are some, like Thomas Aquinas, whose teaching is marvelously clear, profound, and original, but in whose teaching there is little evident influence of their own unique spiritual journey. There are others, among whom Teresa of Avila perhaps stands first, who are doctors of mystical theology in the strict sense of the term. Mystical theology might be defined as the coherent and systematic explanation of the experience of the relationship between the human person and God and especially of the later stages in that relationship. Not all mystical theology is written by mystical theologians, that is, by those who have personally experienced what they write about. Teresa of Avila's writings are so important precisely because she was a mystical theologian of first rank, one who wrote, as she said, of nothing that she had not personally experienced³ and who wrote for no other reason than to encourage others on the path she had already trod. Teresa, like all good teachers, taught in order to enlighten. But she enlightened to enable those who loved God to find their way in the obscurity of the interior life, never to satisfy the curiosity of spiritual spectators.

Teresa's major works⁴ on the spiritual life, The Book of Her Life or autobiography written in 1562, the Way of Perfection written sometime between 1562 and 1565, and the Interior Castle written in 1577,⁵ together deal with the entire interior journey of the believer from the time one begins to live the

spiritual life seriously until the final consummation in the mystical marriage, a state reached by very few during this earthly life. Although others have written on these matters Teresa's treatment has two characteristics which have made her the Church's doctor of prayer par excellence.

First, she treats at great length of the intermediary stages of the spiritual life. Teresa knew from her own experience and that of people she guided that those who are serious about the spiritual life eventually enter a vast realm of religious experience which is no longer primarily characterized by self-directed activity over which one has control but which is not yet characterized by the full unambiguous union of the last stages of the spiritual life. This intermediate realm, in which most people spend many years, is a complex, highly differentiated, and often very obscure territory. Teresa, perhaps more than any other spiritual writer of the Christian tradition, has succeeded in enlightening this terrain and her guidance has been infinitely precious to her fellow pilgrims of succeeding generations.

Secondly, because Teresa was a woman she was denied formal theological education. Although she never ceased to complain of this obstacle in laments that run from helpless regret to a frustration approaching exasperation,⁶ her deprivation is probably our gain. Teresa, as we shall see in detail later on, did not have the speculative categories and the technical terminology of her male contemporaries. Consequently, she speaks of her own experience in concrete, non-technical, but extremely nuanced

and precise terms, resorting regularly to images to clarify her thought. Today, even in academic circles, it is recognized that imagery is often a far better vehicle for the understanding and articulation of religious experience than is abstract philosophical language.⁷ Down through the ages the readers of Teresa of Avila have discovered through personal experience that much of that which is, in other mystical theologians, inaccessible to the theological non-professional is made clear by this woman whose facility in the language of imagery is so striking.

In the first part of this paper I would like to present, in some detail, the content of one segment of Teresa's mystical theology, namely, her treatment of the Prayer of Quiet. Because this topic can be presented in a relatively self-contained way, and because most Christians who have led a serious interior life for any length of time have had at least passing experiences of this kind of prayer, it will serve well both as an initiation into Teresa's teaching and as an enticement to deeper apprenticeship to this great daughter of God who is unsurpassed as a teacher of the spiritual life.

In the second and briefer part of the paper I will draw out a formal characteristic of Teresa's teaching which I think well illustrates the kind of contribution that feminine sensitivity and experience can make to the Church's theological project which has, unfortunately, been too long prosecuted exclusively by men.

PART I

THE PRAYER OF QUIET:A MATERIAL EXAMINATION OF TERESA'S TEACHING

According to Teresa of Avila the spiritual life begins in earnest when a person turns away from a life of sin or indifference and begins to lead a serious life of virtue in which regular personal prayer has a recognized place. This spiritual life unfolds in three fairly distinct stages or periods, although Teresa insists repeatedly that these stages overlap and that most people move back and forth among them many times in the course of a lifetime.⁸ But in general, there are three fairly distinguishable stages through which people pass. In the first, which Teresa treats systematically in the first three mansions of her masterpiece, the Interior Castle, the prayer of the person is exclusively active. That is, the person prays as he or she wishes to and can with the help of God's grace. The prayer-life is self-directed and fully conscious. Discursive meditation on the mysteries of the life of Christ and the truths of the faith is the characteristic form of prayer in this stage. This prayer is set in a life of struggle to acquire the basic virtues of the Christian life, especially self-knowledge, humility, and self-control as well as the all-important virtue of charity.

The third stage, which Teresa treats in the fifth, sixth, and seventh mansions of the Interior Castle, is characterized by a prayer which is wholly passive or mystical in the strict sense of the term. The term passive does not imply, of course, that the person is uninvolved but that the person has no control over the initiation, duration, or character of the experience of God that is given and received. This third stage involves the person's entrance into the Prayer^{of} Union, the Spiritual Betrothal, and finally the Mystical Marriage in which union with God achieves an intimacy and fruition unsurpassable by anything this side of death. Relatively few people, according to Teresa, reach the Prayer of Union, even fewer the Spiritual Betrothal, and only the most privileged souls the rare grace of the Mystical Marriage.

In between the exclusively active or self-directed stage and the exclusively passive or mystical stage is an intermediate realm in which, as Teresa says, the natural and the supernatural, that is, the active and the mystical, mingle.⁹ This is the subject matter of the fourth mansions of the Interior Castle. The central phenomenon of this intermediate stage is the Prayer of Quiet, the focus of our investigation in the first part of this paper. 2

My reason for focussing on the Prayer of Quiet is that, as Teresa herself says, most people who are serious about the spiritual life enter this stage which is meant to prepare them for the full union with God of the final stages but very few pass beyond it.¹⁰ Rather than functioning as the transition it is meant to be it becomes an obstacle which arrests the person's progress in

the interior life. People who reach this stage usually either fall back into more rudimentary types of prayer or fall away from prayer altogether. According to Teresa, the successful navigation of this passage is the condition for further growth in the spiritual life but most people perish in the passage.

Although Teresa does not negate the possibility that some failures at this point are due to infidelity¹¹ she seems to think that the major cause of shipwreck is that people simply do not know how to conduct themselves in this obscure and unfamiliar world and since many can find no one of experience and learning to guide them they lose their way, become discouraged, and either return to a kind of prayer they can handle but which is no longer growth-producing for them or give up prayer altogether in the conviction that they are out of their depth and should content themselves with a virtuous life and leave the subtleties of the mystical life to the saints.

I think that by focussing our attention on this fairly common but almost universally misunderstood experience we will not only enter into Teresa's spiritual teaching at a point that is accessible to many people through their own experience but that we will also respond to one of Teresa's most continuous pastoral preoccupations by learning something, for ourselves and those we may be privileged to guide in the spiritual life, about one of the most dangerous passages in the sea voyage to eternal life.

Teresa's teaching on the Prayer of Quiet must be culled from all three of her major spiritual treatises. In her autobiography Teresa "digresses" at chapter 11 from the narrative of her Life and, in chapters 11-22, gives us a self-contained treatise on mental prayer, a term she uses to include the interior life from its beginnings in discursive meditation through the Prayer of Union. Chapters 14 and 15 are concerned specifically with our topic, the Prayer of Quiet. In the Way of Perfection, a work Teresa wrote for the spiritual instruction of her Sisters at St. Joseph of Avila, the first convent of the Reform, chapters 27-42 comprise an extended commentary on the Our Father. In chapters 30-31 the petition "hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come" provides Teresa with the occasion to develop again her teaching on the Prayer of Quiet. Finally, some fourteen years later, in the Interior Castle, Teresa provides her most mature teaching on the Prayer of Quiet under the image of the Fourth Mansions, or the fourth region in the soul which is imaged as a spacious walled city or castle comprised of concentric regions, the most central of which is the abode of God who reigns in the very center of this vast and beautiful spiritual world.

The passage into the Prayer of Quiet is best understood in contrast to the major stage which precedes it, namely, the stage of discursive prayer. At the beginning of the spiritual life the characteristic form of prayer is an active engaging of the content of faith. The person in prayer considers carefully the events of the life of Christ, the great mysteries of the faith,

and the life and teaching of the saints in order to enter deeply into this tradition, to savor its significance, and to incorporate it into his or her own life. This is the process of putting on the mind of Christ (cf. Phil. 2:5) in order to live his life of self-giving love (Gal. 2:20). Despite the occasional periods of dryness that the beginner experiences discursive prayer is usually essentially satisfying. One has the sense of doing something constructive in one's spiritual life. There is an increasingly deep and enriching assimilation of the faith. One's progress in virtue, although ragged at times, is evident to oneself and to others. The regular practice of discursive prayer, which may be either vocal or mental or, as Teresa points out, ideally a combination of the two,¹² leads to a steadiness and uprightness in the Christian life that, however arduous, is essentially satisfying for the well-motivated believer.

But this form of prayer eventually achieves its purposes and God calls the person to move on. This call frequently comes in the form of an experience of diminishing returns. The prayer which was so well-ordered and at which one had become relatively proficient becomes less and less interesting and productive. The person finds him or herself less and less able to attend to the subject matter selected for prayer. One is bored and distracted and finally simply unable to do at all what one recently did so well. John of the Cross has well delineated the signs by which we can recognize this failure at discursive prayer as an invitation to a new stage of prayer.¹³ The person whom God is calling to more

passive prayer derives little or no satisfaction from meditation but also finds little satisfaction in anything else in life. There is a constant nostalgia for God and a sense of being unable to come to God, even of being culpably separated from God in some way by one's own incapacity and infidelity.

This painful experience which is designed to loosen the individual's hold upon his or her spiritual life and open the person to a larger participation by God in the person's spiritual journey constitutes a dangerous crisis. There are many who simply give up in frustration and limit their prayer-lives to participation in formal common prayer. Others continue doggedly to try to practice discursive prayer despite the boredom and frustration, convincing themselves that at least they are trying and that is the best they can do. Those fortunate enough to have an experienced spiritual guide, or who are themselves spiritually sensitive enough to recognize the delicate action of the Spirit within them, realize that they are being called not to stop praying but to pray differently. At this point we turn to Teresa for guidance.

To understand Teresa's teaching on prayer we must enter into her theoretical framework which was provided by the faculty psychology of classical scholastic theology. Teresa describes the person's prayer experiences in terms of what is being done or undergone by the intellect, the will, the memory, the imagination, the passions, and the senses. She might have been better served by the theoretical framework of contemporary depth psychology but such was not available to her and she is probably more accurately understood within her own linguistic framework than in Freudian or Jungian translation.¹⁴

The entrance into this new stage of prayer which, in its maturity is the Prayer of Quiet, is an antechamber that Teresa calls the Prayer of Recollection.¹⁵ At first, this prayer is active in the sense that it is under the person's control. One can practice it at will. However, in contrast to discursive meditation it is far less filled with activity. The person ceases to attempt to analyze, reason, form convictions, make resolutions, elicit acts of devotion, and so on, and gently enters within him or herself, withdrawing the senses from external distractions, quieting the mind and emotions and resting gently in the presence of God.

If one practices this active recollection as the context for a slow, loving repetition of some familiar vocal prayer, such as the Our Father, or the quiet utterance of brief affections of love and trust one will rather quickly acquire the habit of this new kind of prayer which consists very little in the exercise of the intellect and very much in the movement of the affections. In fact, Teresa tells us that such quiet and loving vocal prayer, practiced in the context of active recollection, is sometimes transmuted by the God into a full-fledged experience of the Prayer of Quiet without the person's even being aware of the change.¹⁶

In the Interior Castle, written many years after the Life and the Way of Perfection, Teresa describes much more fully the gradual transmutation of this Prayer of Active Recollection into a much more passive kind of Recollection.¹⁷ She uses two illuminating images to explain the experience. The first is that of the

shepherd's whistle;¹⁸ the second that of the hedgehog or the turtle.¹⁹ The person faithful to the Prayer of Active Recollection will eventually experience, even outside the time of formal prayer and in the midst of ordinary activities, a kind of gentle attraction inward. It is as if the soul heard the very faint but irresistible sound of the shepherd's whistle calling it to attend to the One who dwells in the center of the soul. It is not the individual who actively recalls him or herself to the presence of God or quiets the senses for prayer. It is the Divine King, the Shepherd, who gently, almost imperceptibly, calls the person toward Him. Teresa uses the image of the hedgehog or the turtle, animals which withdraw into themselves, to explain the psychological experience of the person responding to this inward attraction. But she notes very explicitly that there is a very important difference in that the self-enclosure of these animals is something they can do at will whereas the person called by the shepherd's whistle can in no way cause or even stimulate this experience. It comes unexpectedly, lasts as long as God gives it, and cannot be recaptured when it departs. In other words, it is a genuinely passive or mystical experience, albeit a very initial and transitory one.

The Prayer of Recollection, in its first and active phase and then in its final passive phase, is the immediate preparation for the Prayer of Quiet. The purpose of the experiences in this antechamber is detachment.²⁰ The person is being detached from over-reliance on his or her own intellectual activity and will

power as the source of the encounter with God and from all those over-attachments to external goods and pleasures which distract one from attention to the great Lover who dwells in the innermost region of the interior castle. This detachment from things and from self is accompanied by a decrease in discursiveness and an increase in the affectivity of one's prayer.

The decrease in intellectual or discursive activity in prayer and the corresponding increase in its affective character is the hallmark of the entrance into the Prayer of Quiet. The person, now easily recollected for prayer, finds him or herself interiorly held by a loving absorption in God. There may or may not be some few loving words that arise in that encounter. But essentially the experience consists in a kind of captivity of the will.²¹ The full affectivity of the soul is engaged in a tenuous but wonderfully satisfying and delicately delightful experience of communion.²² Teresa distinguishes sharply between the will which is absorbed in this loving communion and the other faculties which do not usually participate in this liberating captivity and which seem to be, as it were, "on the loose," causing incessant distractions. In the earlier works, the Life and the Way of Perfection, Teresa attributes these distressing and uncontrollable distractions to the intellect and the memory.²³ But in the Interior Castle she tells us that she is greatly relieved to have learned that there is a distinction between the intellect and the mind (by which she means the imagination), and that it is the latter, not the intellect, which is causing all the trouble. What Teresa

is trying to explain, within the theretical framework of scholastic psychology, is the experience of deep, passive, interpersonal communion with God which is frequently accompanied by considerable uncontrollable fantasy activity.²⁴

This analysis is very important because if the person is to enter fully into the Prayer of Quiet she or he must avoid the two-fold temptation caused by this continuation of fantasy activity during the experience of mystical prayer. The first temptation is to fight the distractions. This only reactivates the will and, as Teresa puts it, sends it out chasing around after the errant thoughts and destroys the communion of the Prayer of Quiet.²⁵ One thinks of the parent who continually interrupts a conversation to tell a distracting child to stop interrupting the conversation. The second temptation is to try to engage the intellect in prayer, letting it examine what is going on and reason about it.²⁶ This self-observation of the act of love is destructive of the experience. It is only in the Interior Castle that Teresa comes to a final and resolute position on this distressing topic of distractions during the Prayer of Quiet. She says that there is simply nothing that can be done except to endure them and, to the best of one's ability, to ignore them. They are like the clacking noises of a mill which must not be allowed to distract us from the silent grinding of the grain that is going on in the depths of the soul.²⁷

The Prayer of Quiet itself, which consists in the absorption of the relational capacities of the person in communion with the Beloved is an experience of deep, quiet, peaceful happiness and satisfaction. The person does not know where the experience comes from or how it occurs but simply that it is utterly different from any earthly joy it has ever known.²⁹ In the Interior Castle Teresa gives us her most developed description and analysis of the deep passive joy and satisfaction of the Prayer of Quiet. By means of the image of the two water systems³⁰ she distinguishes very clearly between what she calls "consolations" which are the positive feelings that we generate by discursive prayer and which are not different in kind from our more intense natural joys at experiences such as long-awaited reunions, and "spiritual delights" which constitute the Prayer of Quiet.³¹ Consolations are compared to the water which is brought into a garden by means of a complicated system of aqueducts. The water gets there and the flowers get watered but it takes a good deal of ingenuity and effort and there is considerable noise and commotion as the irrigation system functions. This, says Teresa, is an image of the satisfactions obtained by discursive meditation. By our efforts in prayer we bring about a certain consolation or spiritual joy which is natural in its origins but which ends in God.

Spiritual delight, the characteristic experience of the Prayer of Quiet, is altogether different. The soul is like a water basin built over a gushing spring. It is silently, abundantly, effortlessly filled with ever fresh water. But, says

Teresa, the basin never overflows. It dilates to contain ever more divine goodness as God pours His own love into the soul. The source of this water is not and cannot be ourselves or our efforts. This joy arises within us by direct gift from God and overflows into our whole being reaching even to our bodies and emotions. Here Teresa introduces another image to amplify this one and emphasize the interiority and passivity of these delights. She says the soul seems to have a burning brazier in its very depths upon which grains of perfume have been cast and which fills the soul with overflowing warmth and fragrance.

This experience is so deeply satisfying and at the same time so tenuous that the person is afraid even to change position or draw a deep breath lest it disappear.³² But, as Teresa warns again and again, nothing is more counterproductive than the effort to sustain the experience.³³ Its pure passivity is known most clearly by its utter uncontrollability. The experience can, in no way, be brought about. Nor, if it is given, can it be intensified or sustained. It is given when God wants to give it, sometimes outside the time of formal prayer, and it lasts as long as God wills it to last.³⁴ Teresa warns us against efforts to suspend all thought in hopes of inducing the experience and against trying to intensify it by reflecting on God's goodness or our own sins.³⁵ She says that the first is dangerous foolishness and the second is like piling giant logs on a tiny spark in hopes of augmenting it.³⁶

The main reason why so many people who are invited by God into this deep Prayer of Quiet fail to respond is because they simply do not know how to conduct themselves in this obscure experience so unlike any previous kind of prayer. They are overcome with joy and desire and yet every effort to cooperate with or foster the grace seems to destroy it. Nothing that they have learned about the spiritual life seems applicable -- and indeed that is true. They have entered an entirely new country where the laws of spiritual gravity do not exist.

In the Way of Perfection Teresa evokes another of her wonderful images to elucidate this experience and indicate how one should respond to the gift. She says the soul is like a newborn infant who is taken to the breast.³⁷ Its mouth is guided, the milk is given, it has nothing to do but receive and taste and enjoy. At the outside, its role is to swallow, not to resist the goodness that comes to it from some infinite source that it knows and does not know. The experience itself Teresa likens to a tiny spark which one might encourage with the very gentlest puff of an unspoken word of love or the contribution of a tiny straw of affection.³⁸

Perhaps no spiritual writer has ever given more helpful instruction on how to conduct oneself in the stage of the spiritual life that we are discussing. The first and most important counsel is that one must recognize the grace when it is given. It is so delicate and so unlike our previous experiences that we can fail to understand what is happening and ignore or reject it.

The experience is recognized in itself, as we have said, by the unearthly peace, joy, and deep satisfaction in communion with God that arises within the soul, either during prayer or outside of prayer. Sometimes the experience lasts for several days permeating all the the activities of the person's normal day with a peaceful joy that absorbs one interiorly even as the capacity for loving service seems to increase.³⁹

But, when the actual experience ceases, and the person is utterly incapable of recapturing it, one is tempted to think that it was illusory or even that it was induced by the evil spirit. Even when a person has had several experiences of this kind of prayer the fact that it cannot be elicited at will makes it seem illusory or unreal or at least not permanently significant once it is gone. This failure to recognize what is happening leads the person to attempt to revert to earlier forms of prayer. Finding it impossible to pray in the former way the person becomes discouraged and flounders helplessly, often permanently losing his or her way in the interior life.⁴⁰

But there are signs, within and outside of the experience of the Prayer of Quiet itself, that the experiences are real and that one is being called, as Teresa says, to great things in the service of God.⁴¹ The Prayer of Quiet is best discerned, as all prayer is, by the effects it produces in the life of the person outside the time of prayer.⁴² One who is experiencing this wonderful absorption in God during prayer will notice a marked strengthening of all the virtues, but especially of detachment and humility. The

person experiences him or herself more free, less fearful in the service of God. One is more willing to undertake things that could cause one suffering because one is more confident that God is present and active and that no real evil can befall one who is so wonderfully loved by God. The pleasures and distractions that had seemed so important before lose their grip on the person because, however much they are enjoyed, they cannot compare to the kind of joy the person now knows by experience. The repeated experience of being given so much and yet being utterly incapable of bringing about the gift teaches the person a kind of humility that, as Teresa says, "utterly undoes" one and leaves the soul totally open and without pretense. Even when the person fails morally he or she repents immediately. Deep qualitative changes are taking place in the person and one who is aware that this is happening must have the spiritual sensitivity to recognize its source, to trust the experience of prayer that is bringing it about, to cooperate outside of prayer, and to remain always disposed for the Prayer of Quiet itself when it occurs.⁴³

Likewise, Teresa offers ways of discerning when what seems to be the Prayer of Quiet is self-induced illusion of even the action of the evil spirit.⁴⁴ When we are the source of our own "mystical" experience we will notice that none of the above effects are produced, that the experience ceases as soon as we stop straining, and that it is followed not by the suppleness of spirit and readiness of will described above but by rigidity and dryness. When the evil spirit counterfeits the works of God the prayer

experience produces disturbance, lack of humility, and resistance to the invitations to the deeper life of love in and outside the time of prayer. In short, discerning the Prayer of Quiet requires attentiveness and honesty but it is entirely possible and utterly necessary if we are to advance in the interior life.

Having recognized that one has been led into the Prayer of Quiet one must learn how to behave in this new realm. In all three of her major works Teresa deals at great length with this important matter. First, the person must, paradoxically, desire this prayer by not desiring it.⁴⁵ Besides being truly convinced that we do not deserve, and never could deserve, such a direct self-gift of God the soul must guard itself against becoming attached to the delights of God rather than to God. In a certain sense we must seek God in prayer with such purity of heart that the presence or absence of the Prayer of Quiet does not capture our attention.

When we experience the inward drawing and the influx of quiet joy that constitutes the Prayer of Quiet we must give ourselves up to it as the infant gives itself up to its feeding. We must ignore the distractions of fantasy, and resist the temptation to begin, as Teresa says, "composing speeches" for God.⁴⁶ No force or effort or noise is called for, nor are we invited to investigate this experience or try to understand it.⁴⁷ Our only task is to remain attentive to what God is doing, to receive what is being given, and to let the love and gratitude and joy that the gift elicits well up without any effort on our part to produce them or control them.⁴⁸

Besides the temptation to analyze the experience or to try to control it most people called to this Prayer of Quiet experience a kind of anxiety, a feeling that they are doing nothing, or at least not doing enough. They have a compulsive need to "say their prayers" anyway, to be sure at the end of a period of prayer that they have gotten in the exercises that were allotted to this period.⁴⁹ Teresa warns us that yielding to this temptation is a regression that will snuff out the tiny spark of mystical prayer that God has enkindled in the soul.

Finally, besides recognizing the Prayer of Quiet in itself and in its effects in life and cooperating passively with it when it is given, the person must learn to cope courageously with the sufferings that accompany this stage of the spiritual life.⁵⁰ Although the Prayer of Quiet itself is infinitely delectable it is not without its trials. The very tenuousness of the Prayer, the person's repeated experience of not being able to produce or prolong it, the periods of aridity when the Prayer is not given, the incessant and discouraging distractions of an uncontrollable imagination all combine to make the person anxious and uneasy. Teresa says that most of our suffering in this stage of the spiritual life comes from the fact that we do not understand ourselves, that is our interior lives, very well and that the Devil capitalizes on our ignorance to confuse us, make us anxious, and eventually lead us to either revert to more manageable forms of prayer or to give up prayer altogether.⁵¹ Teresa says that the devil is especially interested in leading these souls

astray because, if they continue to advance, they will do an enormous amount of good whereas their defeat will bring others down as well.⁵²

Painful as they are, the trials of this stage of the spiritual life are beneficial. Teresa points out that their purpose is to purify the soul at a depth that is not accessible to our ascetical efforts.⁵³ The alternations of experiences of joy and aridity, the helplessness in times of dryness, the incessant distractions, the unexpected moral falls that surprise one and shatter one's sense of being well grounded in virtue, the uncertainty about where one is on the spiritual journey, one's inarticulateness about the experience, the deep confusion and embarrassment caused by the devastating incongruence between what one knows oneself to be and what others admiringly think, all combine to break the person's grip on his or her spiritual life. The purpose of this difficult pedagogy is deeper surrender, a surrender that we cannot accomplish by willing it or by practice and which can only be brought about by God's gentle but radical action in the Prayer of Quiet.

Teresa finally warns us that the person who has been gifted with the Prayer of Quiet is not confirmed in grace and that it is not only possible, but unfortunately very common, for those who have been so favored to fall away from this Prayer.⁵⁴ She warns us against becoming over-confident and taking chances with temptations that prudence should tell us are too much for us.⁵⁵ But even if we should fall seriously we must not give up prayer

for in prayer we will be enlightened and speedily brought to a repentance that will sometimes be more beneficial to us than not having ever sinned. The greatest temptation of this stage of the spiritual life, the ultimately fatal one, is to give up the prayer to which we have been called. This temptation comes in many forms from confusion and frustration in prayer itself to regression to more active and manageable types of prayer to the seeking of safety in external activity. There is nothing about which Teresa is more insistent than that we preserve in this prayer no matter what the obstacles.⁵⁶

Although Teresa, especially because she is writing for cloistered nuns, is primarily concerned to describe and explain the interior experience of the Prayer of Quiet she does not neglect to emphasize the fruit of this Prayer in intensified apostolic activity. Those who are graced with mystical prayer, of which the Prayer of Quiet is the first stage, are, says Teresa, being chosen by God for great things. They are being prepared to affect many others in their search for God. In the Way of Perfection Teresa gives a remarkably lucid description of the experience of the Prayer of Quiet that outlasts the formal prayer period and continues for a day or more in a relatively uninterrupted way.⁵⁷ She also describes the healing of the fear of suffering that paralyzes so many in their ministry, the transmutation of a self-absorbed concern for one's own salvation into a gentle and joyful carefulness for God's concerns, and a putting aside of one's pre-occupation with image, status, and reputation

that this prayer gradually brings about.⁵⁸ For Teresa, who spent the last twenty-two years of her life in the incessant creative activity of refomation, foundation, governance, administration, spiritual guidance and writing, the ardent pursuit of the interior life was no escape from the real world of ministry into a narcissistic "Jesus-and-I" spirituality. It was rather the conditio sine qua non of a ministry ablaze with divine love, the source of her energy, her bulwark against unjust persecution, the touchstone of her integrity, and her reward exceeding great. If she encourages us today on this obscure and dangerous but beautiful journey it is that we might be for our own times what she was for hers, beacons in a desperate age.

PART II

EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE, AND ACTION:

A FORMAL EXAMINATION OF TERESA'S TEACHING

Having examined in depth the content of Teresa's teaching on one stage of the spiritual life, the Prayer of Quiet, thereby acquiring a feel for her approach to mystical theology, we are now in a position to undertake a brief formal examination of her thought. I have selected for consideration one characteristic which I think well illustrates the contribution which feminine experience and sensitivities can bring to the theological enterprise. I would not want to defend the proposition that only women do or can approach the theological task in this way. But I think that the history of

theological literature as well as the style of theological discussion prevalent in our institutions and among professional theologians today testify to the fact that the approach I am going to discuss is quite rare. My hypothesis is that the rigorous exclusion, until quite recently, of feminine experience from the theological enterprise of the christian community is largely responsible for the unbalanced sensitivity we bring to the work of reflection upon our faith.

The characteristic of Teresa's mystical theology which I want to consider points up the difference between the understanding of theology as a science and the understanding of theology as christian wisdom. When theology is understood primarily as a science it tends to fall under the spell of the natural sciences as ideal of human knowing. The emphasis falls upon clarity and distinctness of concepts, necessity of argumentation, deductive conclusions, systematic coherence, and cumulation of data expressed in ideal categories and abstract language. All of these characteristics, it goes without saying, have their place in any intellectual enterprise, including theology. However, if theology is most properly understood as the effort to understand the relationship of humanity to God revealed in Jesus Christ through the gift of the Spirit then it is, by its very nature, less an inquiry into "objective" realities distinct from ourselves than a contemplative exploration of a relational world in which we participate. The true end of the study of theology is not merely scientific knowledge but christian wisdom, that sapiential understanding which knows by "tasting"

rather than by analyzing. The biblical understanding of knowledge as mutual self-gift between persons defines the ideal of christian wisdom and this entails the conclusion that to grow in wisdom is to be changed, to be made new and whole in love. My thesis is that Teresa as mystical theologian is a superlative instance of christian wisdom and I want to support this thesis by exploring the dialectic between spiritual experience and speculative theology in her teaching, especially her teaching on the Prayer of Quiet, and the relation of her mystical theology to the life of action in the world.

Let me say immediately that I am not talking here of religious "experiences", whether ordinary ones like vocal prayer or more extraordinary ones like rapture or ecstasy, but of experience as a form of knowledge, what we call experiential knowledge. If, for example, I study the phenomenon of heat I will know speculatively that putting my hand in a fire would be painful. But if I accidentally touch a hot burner I will have experiential knowledge of the same fact. The two kinds of knowledge are quite different. In the case of speculative knowledge my conclusions are fairly easily generalizable by means of abstract concepts and I do not have to be personally involved with them to know their truth and communicate the information to others. In the case of experiential knowledge my conclusions can be communicated, but only with great difficulty to those who lack related experience, and my knowledge is irreducibly personal and involving. If I should later acquire more scientific knowledge about heat it might

illuminate my experiential knowledge in very significant and satisfying ways and enable me to articulate it more clearly but it will remain a post factum clarification rather than an original source of knowledge. Experiential knowledge, in other words, is first order knowledge whereas scientific knowledge is second order or derivative knowledge.⁵⁹

A corollary of this distinction is that first order knowledge is better communicated through symbol, image, and story whereas second order knowledge is better communicated by abstract and technical language. Scripture scholars today are increasingly fascinated with the rhetoric of the Gospels because they have discovered that Jesus' use of symbol, metaphor, and parable was not a concession to the primitive mind-set of an uneducated audience; it was the deliberate choice of first order language to evoke first order knowledge.⁶⁰ Jesus was not trying to convey scientific information about the reign of God but to facilitate experiential knowledge of God that would transform his hearers through personal relationship.

Teresa of Avila in her mystical teaching gave high priority to experiential knowledge both for the understanding of the spiritual life itself and for the practice of spiritual direction or the art of helping others understand and respond appropriately to their own religious experience. To some extent we must recognize here that necessity was the mother of preference. Teresa, because she was a woman having little access to formal theological formation, was forced to rely on her own and others' experience for what she knew of the interior life. Regrettable as it is that women have

been excluded for so long from formal education, this starvation of the speculative intellect has often kept women in touch with the deep experiential sources of human wisdom and prevented them from the alienation that abstraction often fosters. This has been no less true in the theological than in the secular spheres. Teresa of Avila is one of our best examples of this blessing in the guise of deprivation.

In the limited sections of her three major works which we have been considering Teresa appeals dozens of times to her personal experience as the basis of her teaching on particular points. What Teresa claims to have learned from experience ranges from such practical matters as the importance of perseverance in prayer,⁶¹ the effects of the body on interior experience,⁶² and the insidious danger of the temptation to try to teach others about the spiritual life while one is still in the initial stages oneself⁶³ to the most subtle and nuanced distinctions between the Prayer of Quiet and the states immediately preceding and following it,⁶⁴ the difference between the consolations that accompany discursive meditation and the passive delights that are constitutive of mystical experience,⁶⁵ and the difference between active and passive recollection.⁶⁶

Teresa not only relied upon her experience as her own primary source of knowledge about the affairs of the spirit but she insisted that spiritual directors, especially of those who are beginners in the life of prayer, should be persons of deep and broad experience. She says explicitly that good judgement, experience and learning are

the three essentials for a good spiritual director but that if one cannot find a director with all three qualities one should prefer the person of experience.⁶⁷

But here again Teresa's spiritual finesse and good judgment qualify her position. If, she says, one's spiritual director, though experienced in prayer, lacks theological training one should not hesitate to consult others who have more learning in order to be certain that one is walking in the truth. Furthermore, for those who are advanced in the spiritual life and who can rely with confidence upon their own experience,⁶⁸ learned directors, even though less experienced, are preferable. This wise counsel is based on the prudent judgment that what one needs most is not what one already has, in this case experience, but what one lacks, namely theological learning.

It is clear from her writings that, although Teresa was convinced that experience was the royal road to genuine understanding of the spiritual life and that experiential knowledge was qualitatively superior to theoretical knowledge in these matters, she had the highest respect for theological learning. There are passages in which she seems uncritically enthusiastic about those she habitually referred to as "men of learning" and feminist sensitivities can be more than irritated by Teresa's almost frenetic rushing from one "learned man" to another in her hunger for theological enlightenment.⁶⁹

A careful reading of Teresa, however, reveals her highly nuanced and quite consistent position on the relationship between spiritual experience and theological knowledge. Teresa claims, first of all, that her knowledge of the interior life was given to her directly by God, the one who "has always been my Master" and whose desire it was "that [she] have no one else to thank" for her profound understanding of these matters.⁷⁰ She is emphatic about "how different what one understands [from books on the spiritual life] is from what one afterward sees through experience."⁷¹ However, she was convinced that theological learning is of the greatest assistance in illuminating and clarifying one's experience. Theology supplies categories for organizing that experience, makes the distinctions discovered experientially more precise, and supplies language for talking, however inadequately, of the truly ineffable experience of the mystical life. Furthermore, in cases of doubt about the source, nature, and validity of unusual interior experiences theology can make available, in applicable terms, the tradition within which these experiences can be understood and evaluated.⁷² Because she so highly valued the contribution of theology to the full appreciation and articulation of her experience, and because she had, as a woman, very little direct access to theological culture, Teresa was avid in her consultation of theologically trained men. She could not resist any opportunity to discuss spiritual matters with them, ever in hopes of further enlightenment on even a single point that would facilitate her self-understanding and capacity to explain to others the marvels of grace she understood so well from experience.

Nevertheless, Teresa never allowed her own teaching to originate in or even to deal with matters she did not know first from experience.⁷³ She refers to some of the physical phenomena that sometimes accompany the consolations of discursive prayer but says that although she accepts their validity speculatively she cannot speak about them because she had no experience of them.⁷⁴

Even more importantly, Teresa would never allow her personal experience to be contradicted or invalidated by theological teaching regardless of how reputable the sources. For example, in speaking of the Prayer of Recollection, Teresa frankly acknowledged that many theologically informed experts on prayer recommended the effort to suspend all thinking as a way of entering into passive prayer. However, she gives her own opinion, based on her experience, that such a suspension is de facto impossible and that the attempt at it is foolish and dangerous. While admitting, perhaps with more the appearance than the reality of self-deprecation, that she could be wrong she says "Those in favor of stopping the mind have never given me a reason for submitting to what they say."⁷⁵ Teresa's refusal to accept the theological opinion of those who considered the humanity of Jesus an obstacle to contemplation in the later stages of the mystical life is well-known. She returned repeatedly to this subject lamenting the fact that she had ever let herself be led astray, even for a brief time, by those theologians whose teaching contradicted her experience.⁷⁶ She was adamant in teaching the opposite, namely, that a direct relationship with Christ is of paramount importance at every stage of the spiritual life, despite the

fact that she had "been contradicted and told that [she did] not understand it."⁷⁷

In short, Teresa had a remarkably true instinct for the relation between experiential and speculative knowledge in matters of the spiritual life. Nothing that can further our relationship with God is to be despised or neglected and Teresa realized that theological learning could illuminate, clarify, organize, and help bring to articulation one's experience of God. However, she was fully convinced of the priority of experiential knowledge both in itself and in relationship to other kinds of knowledge.⁷⁸

Given this priority we should not be surprised to observe Teresa's preference for thinking and explaining by means of images rather than of technical theological language. Although in her writings she apologized for her inability to understand and use such language her evident satisfaction when she hit upon a perfectly appropriate image for what she was trying to explain reveals her real instinct for the appropriateness of first order language.

In speaking about passive recollection as an immediate preparation for entrance into the Prayer of Quiet, Teresa quotes the appropriate theological terms for explaining this state but immediately says, "With such terminology I wouldn't know how to clarify anything. That's what's wrong with with ^{me}" [^]⁷⁹ She then reverts to her image of the interior castle and describes the process of recollection through the image of the divine Shepherd dwelling in the innermost chamber of the castle and recalling His wandering subjects, that is, the faculties of the soul, by means of a barely

audible but irresistible whistle. She then exclaims, "I don't think I've ever explained it as clearly as I have now."⁸⁰

Throughout this paper we have evoked a number of Teresa's images: the interior castle, the interior garden with its flowers and weeds, the four ways of watering the garden, the two water basins imaging consolations and spiritual delights, the spiritual life as a sea voyage, the Prayer of Quiet as a tiny spark and as a brazier in the depths of the soul, the recollected soul as hedgehog or turtle, and the experience of the Prayer of Quiet as the experience of an infant at the breast.

It is important to realize that these images are not mere likenesses or illustrations which can be dispensed with once the reader gets the point. Most of Teresa's images are genuine cognitive symbols, that is, mediators of her meaning. They do not stand for some reality other than themselves as signs do; rather they are the presentation of realities which cannot really be presented otherwise.⁸¹

Teresa's presiding metaphor in the masterpiece of her maturity is the interior castle. She says that this image came to her suddenly as she was trying to think how she might write the book she had been asked to write on the interior life.⁸² Actually, she mentions the interior castle for the first time in the Way of Perfection, written fourteen or fifteen years before the Interior Castle.⁸³ Teresa had been living the image for many years and it suddenly emerged, fully elaborated, at the moment she needed it for explanation.

We get a valuable clue to the true function of the image in Teresa's life, thought, and teaching in the Epilogue to the Interior Castle. She invites her readers to enter the castle, which she really conceives as a kind of walled city, any time they wish, and to walk freely in its spacious and lovely gardens, to explore with fascination its labyrinthine ways, and to desire ever more intensely admission to the innermost region wherein dwells His Majesty, the divine lover.⁸⁴ She does not invite her readers to think about the image. She invites them to participate in it, to live the interior experience through it. This is the difference between an illustrative image which simply illuminates something that can be understood directly in itself and the symbol which mediates a mystery which cannot be encountered except in symbol.

The interior castle is an organizing symbol to which and by which most of the other images she uses are ordered. There are two striking characteristics of Teresa's images, both of which suggest the influence of her femininity on her religious sensibility. First, her symbol system is controlled by depth imagery rather than by height imagery. Interiority rather than ascent is at the heart of her experience. Withdrawal from the exterior world into a sphere deep within where all real living takes place is the form of Teresa's spirituality.⁸⁵ She was very active in the affairs of her time and always maintained that the true criterion of genuine prayer was the effects of the prayer in the person's everyday life and behavior.⁸⁶ But exterior activity, including the practice of

virtue, was the overflow of a life that took place in the center of the soul. It might well be argued that this spiritual experience is analogous to the ordinary experience of most women. Not only do women experience their own interior depths as the locus of the experience of love and the origination of life,⁸⁷ but historically women have not had the same experience men have of discovering their potentialities and worth through action in the public forum. They have, by cultural necessity, attended more to the interior mystery of being than to the exterior drama of doing. It is what they have generated within themselves, what they have experienced in their own depths, that has given women access to their identity and value. It should not surprise us that Teresa learned the dynamics of the spiritual life during her five cloistered years in the convent of St. Joseph of Avila. The extraordinary public activity of the years that followed ~~was~~ the overflow and enrichment of a developed interior life.

The second characteristic of Teresa's symbol system was its reliance on nature. Teresa was fascinated with bees and silkworms and turtles and hedgehogs and water and flowers and fire. She tells us that she observed these things carefully, convinced that every element of nature held mysteries beyond our imagining.⁸⁸ Today we would say that she had an exceptional sensitivity to the symbolic. Water especially, that transparent, mysterious, life-giving, and precious substance attracted Teresa from her childhood years when she so loved the picture of the Samaritan Woman at the well. It has not been the vocation of women, historically, to

subdue and dominate nature. They have had little to do with the violence against nature that has so decimated our environment. Women have been more involved in fostering and protecting creation. The paradigm of contemplative appreciation rather than of domitative power characterized Teresa's approach to the simple realities of nature which she experienced as miracles of divine disclosure.

Teresa experienced and thought in symbols and so she used that imagery to communicate her spiritual theology to others. No doubt there have been those in the history of theology who have found this confusing and, like Jesus' disciples, wished that she had spoken plainly without recourse to imaginative language. Today we are in a better position to appreciate the fact that Teresa did not write in images because she couldn't do any better. She wrote in images because, without formal training, she devined the appropriateness of first order language for the expression and communication of first order knowledge.⁸⁹

We live in an age so hungry for religious experience that it seems that no teaching is too absurd, no practice too bizarre, no technique too dangerous if it promises to deliver transcendental awareness. In Teresa we have a woman whose experience of God was as deep and intense as any recorded in christian history. Even more wonderful is the fact that she was able to articulate that experience for successive generations. Perhaps most wonderful of all is the fact that she articulated it by means of images that not only convey her own experiential knowledge but which invite her readers to enter into that experience, to taste and see that

the Lord is good. Hers is not a speculative theology describing or explaining truths about God. It is genuine mystical theology which invites us to "come and see." Teresa offers no facile techniques for easy passage on the high seas of contemplation. But she does offer what we need, the witness of one who has seen God and found the way to communicate her experience in such wise that we can learn from her what we need to know to undertake our own sea voyage. She is a wisdom figure, a mystical theologian, a woman who is pre-eminently Doctor of the Church.

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FOOTNOTES

- ¹Acta Apostolicae Sedis, vol. LXII, n. 9, p. 592.
- ²Cf. J. Quasten, Patrology, vol. I (Utrecht-Antwreps: Spectrum, 1975), p. 10.
- ³"I shall speak of nothing of which I have no experience, either in my own life or in the observation of others, or which the Lord has not taught me in prayer." St. Teresa of Avila, The Way of Perfection, tr. and ed. E. A. Peers (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday [Image], 1964), Prologue. Hereafter this work will be cited as Way with chapter number.
- ⁴Teresa wrote some devotional pieces including some poems, the historical works on the foundations, numerous letters, and other minor works but the three major works in which we find her mystical theology are The Book of Her Life in the Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, vol. I, tr. K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1976), hereafter cited as Life with chapter and paragraph; The Way of Perfection (note 3 above); The Interior Castle, tr. K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez (New York/Ramsey/Toronto: Paulist, 1979), hereafter cited as Castle with part, chapter, and paragraph.
- ⁵For chronological details of Teresa's life and works and useful arrangements of material I am indebted to M. Brennan who compiled Teresa of Jesus and the Divine Game of Chess: A Study of Teresian Prayer (Toronto: Regis College, 1981).
- ⁶See, for example, Life 12:4; 13:19; Castle IV, 1,5.
- ⁷J. Welch in Spiritual Pilgrims: Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila (New York/Ramsey: Paulist, 1982), operating on this very principle, explores the major images of the Interior Castle in the light of Jungian Psychology.
- ⁸Cf. Life 15:12; Way 30; Castle IV, 1,2.
- ⁹Life 14:8; Way 31; Castle IV, 3, 13.
- ¹⁰Life 15:2,5; Way 31; Castle IV, 3,13.
- ¹¹Way 31.
- ¹²Way 30.
- ¹³John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul, tr. ed., introd. E.A. Peers, 3rd rev. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday [Image] 1959), I, 9.

- ¹⁴ Although it contains some fascinating analyses and hypotheses, C. Romano's Freudian analysis of Teresa in "A Psycho-Spiritual History of Teresa of Avila: A Woman's Perspective," Western Spirituality: Historical Roots, Ecumenical Routes, ed. M. Fox (Santa Fe: Bear & Company, 1981) 261-295 is seriously reductionistic. A much more successful exploration of Teresa in terms of contemporary psychological theory in Welch's Spiritual Pilgrims (see n. 7 above).
- ¹⁵ The active phase of the Prayer of Recollection is dealt with most extensively in Way 26-28.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Way 30.
- ¹⁷ Castle IV, 3, 1; IV, 3, 3.
- ¹⁸ Castle IV, 3, 2.
- ¹⁹ Castle IV, 3, 3.
- ²⁰ Castle IV, 3, 1.
- ²¹ Life 14:2; Way 31.
- ²² Life 14:4-6; Way 31; Castle IV, 2, 2.
- ²³ Cf. Life 14:2-3; 15:1; Way 31.
- ²⁴ Castle IV, 1, 8.
- ²⁵ Way 31; Castle IV, 1, 8-9; The image of bee abandoning the hive to chase other bees instead of staying in the hive to make honey occurs in Life 15:6.
- ²⁶ Way 31.
- ²⁷ Castle IV, 1, 8-9 and 11-14. The image of the mill occurs in the Life 15:6.
- ²⁸ In the Life Teresa says that the faculties are not really absorbed (15:1) but in the Castle (IV, 2, 7), after indicating that she is aware of contradicting herself because "the Lord has perhaps given me clearer understanding" of these things she does speak of absorption which is, however, not yet union.
- ²⁹ Cf. Life 14:4-6; Way 30 and 31; Castle IV, 2, 4 and 6.
- ³⁰ Castle IV, 2, 2.

³¹Teresa deals with this distinction in Castle IV, 2, 4-6,

³²Life 15:1; Way 31.

³³Life 15:1.

³⁴Castle IV, 2, 9.

³⁵Castle IV, 3, 5; Life 15:4; Way 31.

³⁶Life 15:6; Castle IV, 3, 5.

³⁷Way 31.

³⁸Way 31; Life 15:7.

³⁹Way 31.

⁴⁰Way 31; Life 15:3; Castle IV, 2, 8 and IV, 3, 9.

⁴¹Life 15:5; Way 31, Castle IV, 3, 10.

⁴²Castle IV, 2, 8.

⁴³See esp. Life 15:14.

⁴⁴Life 15:9-10.

⁴⁵Cf. Castle IV, 3, 8.

⁴⁶Life 15:7, 9; Way 31; Castle IV, 3, 5-7.

⁴⁷Way 31.

⁴⁸Castle IV, 3, 4; Life 15:6; Way 31.

⁴⁹Way 31.

⁵⁰Life 14:9

⁵¹Castle IV, 1, 9 and 11-14.

⁵²Castle IV, 3, 10.

⁵³Life 14:9.

⁵⁴Life 14:10; 15:2-3.

- ⁵⁵The person experiencing this prayer thinks that nothing further is possible, that it has arrived at the very summit of the spiritual life (Life 15:1; Way 31). It is tempted to take chances (Castle IV, 3, 10) in the moral sphere.
- ⁵⁶Castle IV, 2, 8; Life 14:10, 15:2-3; Way 31.
- ⁵⁷Way 31.
- ⁵⁸Life 14:5; Castle IV, 3, 9.
- ⁵⁹A modern author who has written extremely well on the importance of first order knowledge and language in the sphere of theology is Amos N. Wilder. See esp. his books Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) and Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964).
- ⁶⁰See, for example, A. N. Wilder, Jesus' Parables and The War of Myths: Essays on Imagination in the Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) and N. Perrin, Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).
- ⁶¹Life 11:13.
- ⁶²Life 11:15.
- ⁶³Life 13:8.
- ⁶⁴Castle IV, 1.
- ⁶⁵Castle IV, 1, 5.
- ⁶⁶Life 14:2; Way 28; Castle IV, 3, 3.
- ⁶⁷Life 13:14-16.
- ⁶⁸Life 13:18-19.
- ⁶⁹Life 13:20; 15:16 and elsewhere.
- ⁷⁰Life 12:6.
- ⁷¹Life 13:12.
- ⁷²E. g., on distinguishing between good and evil influences, Life 15:16.
- ⁷³Way, Prologue.
- ⁷⁴Castle IV, 2, 1.

⁷⁵Castle IV, 3, 4.

⁷⁶Life 22:1-9; Castle VI, 7, 5.

⁷⁷Castle VI, 7, 5.

⁷⁸E. g. Way 28; Way 31; Life 15:6.

⁷⁹Life 13:17; Castle IV, 3, 2.

⁸⁰Castle IV, 3, 3.

⁸¹For a more extended explanation of the meaning of symbol and how it functions in religious discourse see my articles "History and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel," L'Evangile de Jean: Sources, Rédaction, Théologie, ed. M. de Jonge (Gembloux/Leuven: University Press, 1977) 371-376 including references on the subject; "Symbolism and the Sacramental Principle in the Fourth Gospel," Segni e Sacramenti nel Vangelo de Giovanni, ed. P.-R. Tragan (Rome: Anselmiana, 1977) 221-235.

⁸²Castle I, 1, 1 and following.

⁸³Way 28.

⁸⁴Castle, Epilogue 1-3.

⁸⁵E.g. Life 14:6; Way 28-29; Castle IV, 2, 4-5 and elsewhere.

⁸⁶Castle IV, 2, 8.

⁸⁷Teresa makes an enlightening comparison of the interior of the soul to Mary's womb in Way 28.

⁸⁸Castle IV, 2, 2.

⁸⁹One of the best works I know on this subject is P. Wheelwright's little classic, Metaphor and Reality (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962).